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THE ALCHEMY OF SPACE: TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS IN
HINDUSTANI BY DR. K.K RISHI

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ABSTRACT

The link between the Shakespearean stage and the Urdu stage has been considerably close since the later part of the nineteenth century. However the translators were chiefly concerned with the twists and turns of the plot, remaining almost indifferent to the ethos, characterization and the deep philosophic significance of Shakespeare's works. The sonnets, in particular, were not given adequate attention, and lacked in the seriousness of expression.

My paper dwells on the translation of selected sonnets of Shakespeare into Hindustani by Dr. K.K.Rishi. Dr. K.K. Rishi's book- *Shakespeare ke Chuninda Sonnet Aur Kavita Ansh*, published in 2017. The book presents a cultural encounter where new forms of identity are advanced. It goes beyond the inter-lingual to enter the third space, where alchemy of the universalism of Shakespeare and native semiotic structures can be found.

The translations restore the essential feel of the sonnets as essentially "Shakespearean", yet carry with them a whole new world of usages and structures proving that "translation is seen as a textual *métissage*, a liminal, in-between space, that performs the borderline work of cultural production, and that negotiates and politically transforms the strict delineations of homogeneous national cultures and colonial representations." They are not literal or word for word translations, but substantially bring out the subtle emotions of love, trust and companionship, by expressions that are easily identified by the Indians. Dr. Rishi himself believes that no work can be translated exactly or replicated in another language, as every language has its own grammar, syntax and colouring.

Key words: Alchemy, sonnets, syntax, third space, translation.

Introduction

While translating Shakespeare, one can think of a text as verse and therefore translate it as poems are translated or one can think of it as a story, therefore focus on the plot; or as a linguist pay more attention to the language and word-use, or even focus on the thematic concerns neglecting other features. Depending on the motive and focus, translation might be of several types. Translation of philosophic aphorisms may not be the same as the translation of comic and humorous lines. Similarly, the handling of plays of Shakespeare might be the result of perspectives different from the handling of the sonnets of Shakespeare. Translation of sonnets

is more a personal affair than that of the plays, for they are primarily a showcase of sound and sense, rather than action, plot, characters and movement. One is struck by the maturity of the sonnets in thought, sensitivity and moral earnestness. The universal truths of life, the deep essence of love and the romantic flow of the sound have to be diligently preserved in the sonnets. Dr. K.K.Rishi's translation attempts to keep this preservation in mind. Dr. K.K. Rishi's book- *Shakespeare ke Chuninda Sonnet Aur Kavita Ansh*, was released in an International Seminar at D.A.V.College, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana on 19th January, 2017. Dr. Rishi retired as the Professor of Zoology from Kurukshetra University in 1997. He has held eminent positions as a scientist, and has been honoured by the West Bengal Urdu Academy and Haryana Urdu Academy for his valuable contribution to Urdu literature. He has four collections of Urdu poetry to his credit. The present work pays a tribute to the great Bard, Shakespeare through these translations. The book includes 33 sonnets, five passages from the play *Antony and Cleopatra*, a famous soliloquy from *Hamlet*- "To be or not to be," and another from *As You Like It*- "All the World's A Stage."

In the Preface, Dr. Rishi puts forward his ideas on the significance and process of translation, and the problems he faced regarding the cultural and linguistic differences of the two languages. Dr. Rishi mentions in the Preface that although he has tried to dwell close to the original and use rhythm and metre, but it is free from the stern discipline of the Elizabethan sonnet (13). He agrees to the opinion that translation is like an X-ray not a Xerox.

In this paper, I have tried to highlight some of the special characteristics of his translation. The sonnets of 14 lines have been restructured after translation into 12 to 18 lines in accordance with the sound and sense of the verse. Syntax and structure have been transformed liberally, prioritizing the cadence and flow of the verses, and placing the suitability of the work in the contemporary time and place.

The essence of love and beauty has been given prime importance, overshadowing words of **negation** in the original text. For instance, in sonnet 1, the line "That thereby beauty's rose might never die" has been translated to "रहे जिंदा-ओ-ताबिदा"(15) obliterating the words 'not' and 'die', replacing them with words of immortality. In sonnet 29:

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate, (26)
खुदा से भी दुआ करता हूँ तो सुनता नहीं वो भी
खयाल आता है क्यों न बन सका मैं उस बशर जैसा
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, (26)
इन्हीं मन्फ़ी खयालों और मायूसी के आलम में

Here the effects of negative and powerful sources of pain and suffering are not intensified, rather they are softened to make them seem more acceptable in life.

The layered structure of the original is **simplified** at several places to add relevance and beauty to the verse. It serves both purposes, on one hand, it gives it a local colouring making it far more receptive to the Indian reader, and on the other hand, it loses and shortchanges a few Shakespearean expressions, as in Sonnet 29:

And then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, (26)
तो मायूसी अचानक पर लगा कर दूर उड़ जाए

In sonnet 2:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field, (16)
सर्दियां चालीस जब इस उम्र की जाएंगी बीत
झुर्रियां डालेंगी डेरा तब तारे रुखसार पर

In sonnet 61:

Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake.
For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,

From me far off, with others all too near. (38)

मेरा सच्चा इश्क रखता है सदा मुझ पर नज़र
तेरी खातिर ये भटकने ही नहीं देता मुझे!
मुस्तकिल मेरे तसव्वुर में बसेरा है तिरा
चाहे तू मुझ से बहुत ही दूर है अब इस घड़ी
और जो हैं ग़ैर वो तेरे बहुत नज़दीक हैं!

Symbols in the sonnets have been transformed with an ease to fit into the contemporary tapestry of Indian life. Romanticized imagery of Shakespeare has been used to portray emotions more realistically.

In sonnet 14:

Nor can I Fortune to brief minutes tell,
Pointing to each his thunder, rain and wind. (18)
अगले ही पल में, नहीं इल्म, कि क्या हो जाए!
कैसे कह सकता हूँ मैं, कैसे बता सकता हूँ,
है किसी के लिए सुख दुख का भी कितना हिस्सा!

In sonnet 29:

Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising. (26)
तुम्हारी याद की खुशबू अगर दिल में उतर आए
तो मायूसी अचानक पर लगा कर दूर उड़ जाए,

In sonnet 33:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gliding pale streams with heavenly alchemy. (28)
बहुत सी खुशनुमा सुबहें मिरी आंखों ने देखीं हैं
कि सूरज चूमता है जब पहाड़ों की जबीनों को,
सुनहरी धूप नहलाती है जब वादी के सब्जे को
कि जब कौसे-कुज़ां के रग भर जाते हैं नदियों में!

A space is created to accommodate the native reader. This alchemical space dissolves the colouring of the two identities to form a new colouring, freeing it from the limitations of time and age. In sonnet 18:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day!
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date. (20)
तुझे हम गर्मियों का दिन कहें तो क्या बजा होगा?
नहीं, हरगिज़ नहीं, ये फैसला तो नारवा होगा,
है तेरा हुस्ने-सादा खबतर दिन के उजाले से
तू सूरज की ज़िया से भी ज़्यादा खूबसूरत है,
ज़ियादा मुस्तकिल है तेरे जिस्मो-जां की रानाई

In sonnet 55:

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time. (34)
महल ये संगे-मरमर के, निशां ये शानो-शौकत के
सुनहरी मक़बरे, ये यादगारें शहरयारों की
मिरे अशआर से बढ़कर नहीं पाईदगी इन में,
मिरे अशआर ही में याद तेरी ज़ूफ़िशा होगी,

कि इन सब मक़बरोँ, महलों, फ़सीलों को, हिसारों को
गुज़रते वक्त की ज़ालिम हवा मिसमार कर देगी.

Many words visibly seem to lose their essential place in the verses in translation. They may be taken as a sacrifice while translating the great Bard, as in "error- झूठ" (sonnet 116), "pyramids- क़िले" (sonnet 123), "brass-stone- संगो-आहन" (Sonnet 65), "lark- पर" (sonnet 29).

A remarkable **conciseness** is visible in a number of verses, reducing as many as 25 words into 5.

As in sonnet 18:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade (20)
मगर तेरा ये हुस्ने-लाफना है दाइमो-क्रायम

On the other hand, there is an elaboration of the verse at places where it is required for purpose of rhythm.

As in sonnet 25:

Then happy I, that love and am beloved
Where I may not remove nor be removed. (24)
मैं खुश हूँ कि मिरी महबूब को मुझसे मुहब्बत है,
मुहब्बत ऐसी शै है जो मिटाई जा नहीं सकती
कभी ये कम नहीं होती, ये छीनी जा नहीं सकती !

In sonnet 33, two lines have been versified into four, producing an incessant flow in the rendering of the verse.

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth:
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth. (28)
मगर उससे मुहब्बत का मिरा रिश्ता नहीं टूटा!
मैं ऐसा सोचकर अब यूँ तसल्ली दिल को देता हूँ
अगर बादल में खो सकता है सूरज आसमानों का,
ज़मीं के सूरजों की फिर कहानी और क्या होगी?

In sonnets 46, 73, 116, 141 and a few more, I could discern more clarity in the work of translation than the original text of Shakespeare. In sonnet 46:

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war
How to divide the conquest of thy sight.
Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar,
My heart, mine eye the freedom of that right. (32)
मेरी आंखों और दिल के दरम्यां झगड़ा है ये
किसका कितना हक़ है तेरे हुस्न की तसवीर पर!
आंखें दिल को देखने देती नहीं तेरा जमाल
और दिल रखता है आंखों पर कोई परदा सा डाल!

The famous soliloquy of *Hamlet* (Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1, lines 56-88) takes the liberty of being in the first person from the first line to the last. Expressions like "A bare bodkin," "native hue of resolution," "mortal coil," do not find appropriate articulation in the translation. Words like "will," "conscience," correspond to one common word "दिल". (90)

The final lines of the soliloquy lack in the requisite effects of the original, undermining the intensity of the universal query of the human mind.

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. (90)

खयालों को हमारे इक अंधेरा घर लेता है
बड़े पुख्ता इरादों पर भी पानी फेर देता है,
तो ऐसे में अमल का नाम तक हम भूल जाते हैं।

The soliloquy appeals as a *nazm*, but as a translation it lacks the Shakespearean appeal for which the world knows him.

While translating Shakespeare, some sacrifices have to be made. The layered meanings of words and expressions have been unveiled by the translator, keeping in view his own intellectual perceptions, and more significantly the localness and the native colouring of his own language and its structures. It indisputably involves new semantic, semiotic and cultural contexts. It revives the relevance of poetry that was originally directed towards another audience in another time and at another place, yet maintains a connection that never completely disappears. As the Benjaminian logic goes, without the “source” a translation cannot exist, for its very *raison d’être* as a text in one language depends upon the absence of a text written in another. (Sarah, 17-32) Yet this presence in absentia also requires a translation to depart from the source in new and interesting ways, enabling it to carve a path as a text in its own right. The alchemical space, the space between the original text and translation, goes beyond the inter-lingual and forges fresh linguistic and cultural understandings. The text gets subverted as well as renewed. Paradoxically, even as its importance seems to disintegrate, it endures through endless permutations. It avows a “heterodiegetic transposition”/ “transculturation” of Shakespeare “to suit the native taste.” (Shormishtha Panja 16)

In a theoretical sense, a translation's identity may indeed be ambiguous; but when it comes to the concrete process of weighing up the interpretive possibilities presented by a text against the needs and expectations of those who will receive it, the act of translation requires a decisive politics that from the point of view of the translator is anything but ambiguous. Keeping this in view, Dr. Rishi's translation achieves a worthy status as it resolves several ambiguities of the sonnets through his own clarity of vision and involvement in words. He liberally localizes the Elizabethan symbols and semantic structures to suit the contemporary native reader. He succeeds in constructing a third space that sacrifices the colonial hegemonic structures, yet does not allow the local semiotics and semantics to take over to lose the basic aroma.

Bhabha proposes the concept of the “third space”, as the space for hybridity, the space for subversion, transgression, blasphemy, heresy, and so on. But hybridity is also the space where all binary divisions and antagonisms, typical of modernist political concepts including the old opposition between theory and politics, cease to hold. Instead of the old dialectical concept of negation, Bhabha offers the idea of cultural translation, which he believes to be in itself politically subversive, as the only possible way to transform the world and bring about something politically new. (Buden 196–208)

Literal translation is almost impossible without losing the sense of the matter, and vice versa, you cannot convey the emotion of the play without losing the real meaning of the original words. Dr. Rishi, in his Preface, admits that languages differ in several aspects; therefore translation cannot reach the same level as the original text. (11) A fine translation is like the reverse side of an embroidered cloth. (11) Translation is a complicated task because literary translation is not just translation of words, but it should essentially and seriously encompass emotional, social and cultural aspects. The subtleties of the original text should reflect in the translation. (11)

The artistic re-creation that is brought to bear on the Sonnets can serve the immediate demands of a wide range of other narratives and forms. Whether these are biographical, psychological, elegiac or fantastic in scope, explicitly literary, or concerned with issues of gender or sexuality, Shakespeare's sonnets are constantly being re-invented afresh in new contexts. These translations restore the essential feel of the sonnets as essentially “Shakespearean” at most places, yet carry with them a whole new world of usages and structures proving that “translation is seen as a textual *métissage*, a liminal, in-between space, that performs the borderline work of cultural production, and that negotiates and politically transforms the strict delineations of homogeneous national cultures and colonial representations.” (Stahuljak 256)

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